

The Gods of Mars

The "TARZAN" Man is at His Best in This Wonder Story
By Edgar Rice Burroughs
Author of "TARZAN OF THE APES," Etc.

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

John Carter, the American who was transported to Mars and who there won fame as a warrior and leader, is now in a position to return to earth. Years later he revisits Mars and finds that the world he once knew has changed. He is now a man of the world, and he is no longer the same man who first came to Mars. He is now a man of the world, and he is no longer the same man who first came to Mars.

CHAPTER V.

A Break for Liberty.

HAT he who hesitates is lost proved itself a true aphorism in this instance, for another moment saw me creeping stealthily toward the door of the guard house.

Gently I pressed it open a crack; enough to discover a dozen blackes stretched upon their silks in profound slumber. At the far side of the room a rack held the swords and firearms of the men.

Warily I pushed the door a trifle wider to admit my body. A hinge gave out a resentful groan. One of the men stirred, and my heart stood still. I cursed myself for a fool to have thus jeopardized our chance for escape, but there was nothing for it now but to see the adventure through.

With a spring as swift and as noiseless as a tiger's I lit beside the guardsman who had moved. My hands hovered above his throat awaiting the moment that his eyes should open.

For what seemed an eternity to my overwrought nerves I remained poised thus. Then the fellow turned again upon his side and resumed the even respiration of deep slumber.

Carefully I picked my way between and over the soldiers until I had gained the rack at the far side of the room. Here I turned to survey the sleeping men.

All were quiet. Their regular breathing rose and fell in a soothing rhythm that seemed to me the sweetest music I had ever heard.

Gingerly I drew a long sword from the rack. The scraping of the scabbard against its holder as I withdrew it sounded like the filing of cast iron with a great rasp, and I looked to see the room immediately filled with alarmed and attacking guardsmen.

But none stirred.

The second sword I withdrew noiselessly, but the third clanked in its scabbard with a frightful din. I knew that it must awaken some of the men, and I was on the point of forestalling their attack by a rapid charge for the doorway, when again, to my surprise, not a black moved.

Either they were sound asleep, or else the noises that I made were really much less than they seemed to me.

I was about to leave the rack when my attention was attracted by the revolvers. I knew that I could not carry more than one away, and I was on the point of leaving the rack when my attention was attracted by the revolvers.

And as I congratulated myself I heard the door opposite me open; and there, looking me full in the face, stood the officer in charge. He evidently took in the situation at a glance and appreciated the gravity of it as quickly as I, for my revolvers came up almost before I knew it, and he started to shoot.

And at the same instant I saw him crumple to the ground. Where I hit him I do not know, nor if I killed him, but he was dead.

I was through the window at my rear. In another second the waters of Omean closed above my head, and the three of us were swimming. He had a hundred yards away.

Xodar was burdened with the boy and I with the three long swords, while the revolver I had dropped to the water. We were both strong swimmers, it seemed to me that we moved at a snail's pace through the water. I was swimming on my back, and the boy was swimming on his front.

Our progress was slow, but we were making good headway. The water was calm, and the sky was clear. We were making good headway.

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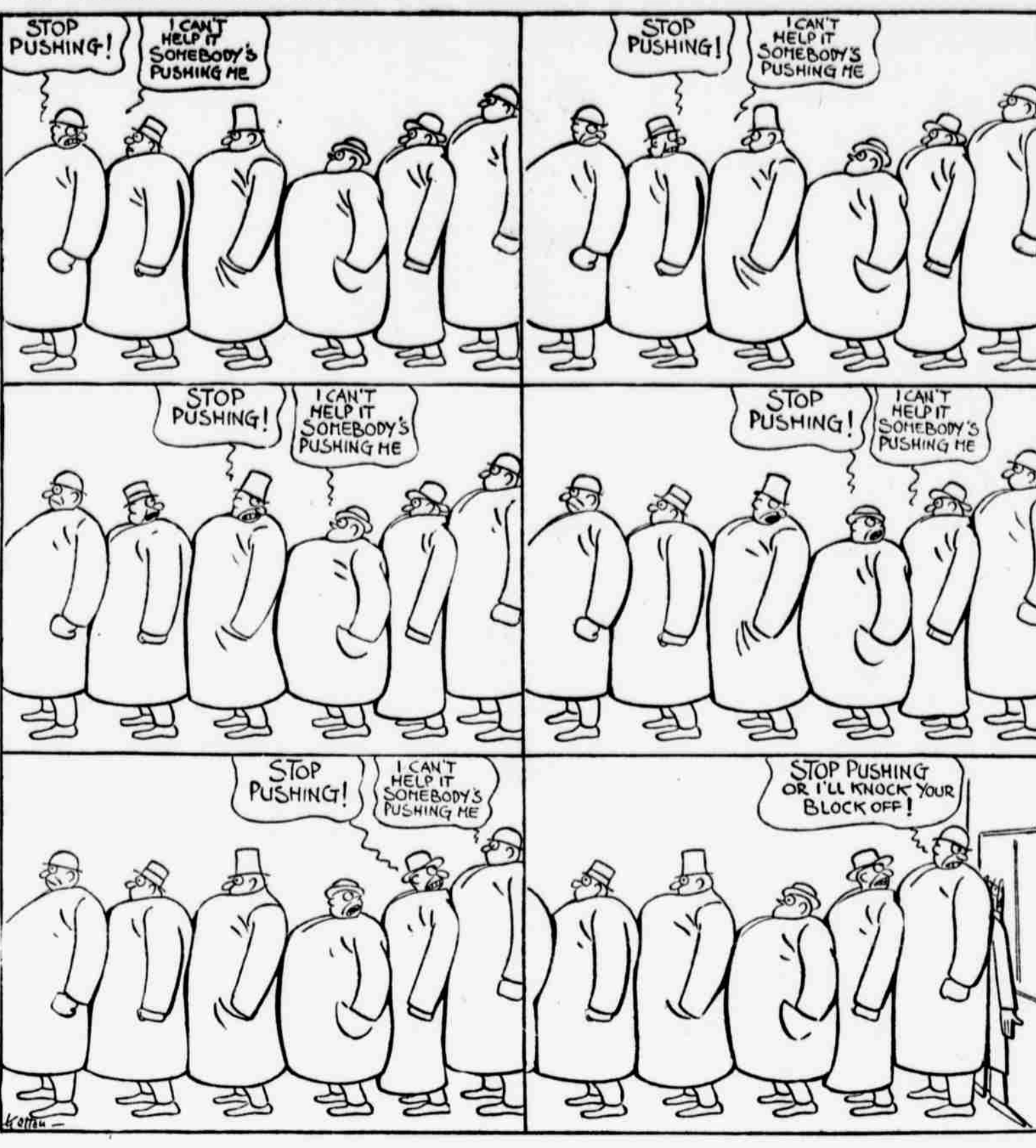
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In the Subway

Copyright, 1936, by Maurice Ketten

By Maurice Ketten



Omean lies perhaps two miles below the surface crust of Mars. Our speed must have approximated two hundred miles an hour, for Martian flyers are swift, so that at most we were in the shaft not over forty seconds.

We must have been out of it for some seconds before I realized that we had accomplished the impossible. Black darkness enshrouded all about us. There were neither moons nor stars. Never before had I seen such a thing upon Mars, and for the moment I was uncomprehending.

Then the explanation came to me. It was summer at the South Pole. The ice cap was melting and these meteoric phenomena, clouds, unknown upon the greater part of Barsoom, were shutting out the lights of heaven from this portion of the planet.

Fortunate indeed was I, for I did not take long to grasp the opportunity for escape which this happy condition offered us. Keeping the head of the shaft and I raced her for the impenetrable curtain which nature had hung above this dying world to shut us out from the sight of our pursuers.

We plunged through the cold damp fog without diminishing our speed, and in a moment emerged into the glorious light of the two moons and the million stars.

I dropped into a horizontal course and headed due north. Our enemies were a good half hour behind us with no conception of our direction.

We had performed the miraculous and come through a thousand dangers unscathed—we had escaped from the land of the First Born.

No other prisoners in all the ages of Barsoom had done this thing, and now as I looked back upon it I did not seem to have been so difficult at all.

I said as much to Xodar, over my shoulder.

"It is very wonderful, nevertheless," he replied. "No one else could have accomplished it but John Carter." He added with emphasis that John Carter was the name of the hero.

Xodar had been at the wheel as I talked with my son, and now he called me.

"She is dropping badly by the head," John Carter said. "So long as we are rising at a stiff angle it is not noticeable, but now that I am trying to keep a horizontal course it is different. The wound in her bow has opened one of her forward ray tanks."

It was true, and after I had examined the damage I found it a much graver matter than I had anticipated. Not only was the forced angle at which we were rising impeding our speed, but at the rate that we were losing our repulsive rays from the forward tanks it was but a question of an hour or more when we would be floating stern up and helpless.

We had slightly reduced our speed with the dawning of a sense of security; but now I took the helm once more and pulled the noble little engine wide open, so that again we raced north at a terrific velocity.

In the mean time Cartoris and Xodar, with tools in hand, were putting with the great rent in the bow in a hopeless endeavor to stem the tide of escaping rays.

It was still dark when we passed the dead silent low surrounding hills, with here and there the grim and silent cities of the dead past; great piles of mighty architecture tenanted only by the memories of a once powerful race, and by the great white apes of Barsoom.

—but even with such evidence I could scarce credit the truth of what seemed so improbable to me, how ever much I tried to be true. Do you know what thing it was that convinced more than all the others?

"What, my boy?" I asked.

"For long years, my son, I can scarce recall a moment that the radiant vision of your mother's face has not been before me. Tell me of her."

"Those who have known her long ago say that she has not changed, unless it be to grow more beautiful—more that possible. Only, when she thinks I am not about to see her her face grows very sad and wistful."

"She thinks ever of you, my father; and all Helium mourns with her and for her. Her grandfather's people love her. They love you also and fairly desire a combination of her and yours—Cartoris."

"Each year that brings its anniversary of the day that saw you racing across a nearly dead world to unlock the secret of that awful portal behind which lay the mighty power of life for countless millions, a great festival is held in your honor. But there are tears mingled with the thanksgiving of the happiness is not with them to share the joy of living he died to give them. Upon all Barsoom there is no greater name than John Carter."

"And by what name has your mother called you, my boy?" I asked.

"The people of Helium asked that I be named with my father's name, but my mother said no; that you and I, together, and that your wish must be honored before all others. So the name that she called me to the one that you desired, a combination of her and yours—Cartoris."

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It was becoming more and more difficult to maintain our little vessel

in a horizontal position. Lower and lower sagged the bow until it became necessary to stop the engine to prevent our flight terminating in a swift drive to the ground.

When Two Women Love the Same Man

and when he isn't sure whether he loves either or both of them,
What is He to Do?

That is one of the queer problems confronting the hero of

A MAN'S HEARTH

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They did not like it, but both were good soldiers, and it had been agreed that I should command. The sun already was low, so that I did not have long to wait before the sudden darkness of Haroom engulfed us.

With a parting word of instruction to Cartoris and Xodar, in case I should not return, I bade them all farewell and set forth at a rapid dog-trot toward the city.

As I emerged from the hills the nearer moon was swinging its wild light through the heavens, its bright beams streaming to illuminate the barbaric splendor of the ancient metropolis.

The city had been built upon the gently rolling foothills that, in the dim and distant past, had sloped down to meet the sea. It was due to this fact that I had no difficulty in entering the streets unobserved.

The green hordes that use these deserted cities seldom occupy more than a few squares about the central plaza, and as they come and go, always across the dead sea bottoms that the cities call it is usually a matter of comparative ease to enter from the hillsides.

Once within the street I kept close in the dense shadows of the walls. At intervals I halted and motioned them to make sure that none was in sight before I sprang quickly to the shadows of the opposite side.

Thus I made the journey to the vicinity of the plaza without detection. As I approached the pulsing of the inhabited portion of the city I was made aware of the proximity of warriors' quarters by the squealing and howling of the throat and strident call of the hordes.

These old familiar sounds that are wont to fill the air of Haroom with a thrill of pleasure surging through me. It was as one might feel on coming home after a long absence.

It was amid these sounds that I had first of all seen the incomparable Dejah Thoris in the age-old marble halls of the dead city of Korad.

As I stood in the shadows at the far corner of the first square where houses of the hordes were met, I saw warriors emerging from several of the buildings. They all went in the same direction, toward a great building which stood in the corner of the square.

My knowledge of green Martian customs convinced me that this was either the quarters of the principal chieftain or contained the audience chamber of the ruler of the city.

It was evident that something was afoot which might have a bearing on the recent capture of Dejah Thoris. To reach this building, which I now felt imperative that I do, I must need traverse the entire length of one square and cross a broad avenue and a portion of the second square.

From the noises of the animals which came from every courtyard about me I knew that there were many eyes upon me, and I was conscious of several communities of the great hordes of the Warhorns of the south.

To pass undetected among all these eyes was in itself a difficult task, but I was to find and rescue the great Thark I must expect even more formidable obstacles before success could be attained.

I had entered the city from the south, and now stood on the corner of the avenue through which I had passed the first intersecting avenue south of the plaza.

The buildings on the south side of this square did not appear to be inhabited, and I decided to gain the inner courtyard through one of them.

Nothing occurred to interrupt my progress through the deserted plaza, and I came into the inner courtyard close to the rear walls of the east buildings without detection.

Within the courtyard a great number of the hordes were restlessly about, cropping the moss-like overgrowth which overgrows practically the entire uncultivated area of Mars.

Close to the east wall, beneath the overhanging balconies of the second floor, I crept in dense shadows the full length of the courtyard until I reached the buildings at the north end. These were lighted for about three floors up, but above the third floor all was dark.

The balcony of the balcony of the second floor was a matter of easy accomplishment—an agile leap gave me a hand-rail above. In another instant I had drawn myself up on the balcony.

Here through the open windows I saw the green folk squatting upon their sleeping silks and furs, grunting and snoring in their sleep, in connection with their wondrous telepathic powers, is ample for their conversational requirements.

As I drew close to the balcony to their words a warrior entered the room from the hall beyond.

"Come, Tan Gama!" he cried. "We are to take the Thark before Kab Kadja has time to reach the city."

The warrior addressed arose, and beckoning to a fellow squatting near, the three left the apartment.

It was not long before I saw the chance might come to free Tara Taras at once. At least I would learn the location of his prison.

But not a moment later the corridor than I saw the three warriors at the other end—those whom I had just seen leaving the apartment. Then a turn to the right took them from my sight again.

Quickly I hunched along the hallway in pursuit. My gait was reckless, but I felt that I had been kind in need to turn out an opportunity within my grasp, and I could not afford to allow it to elude me now.

At the far end of the corridor I found a spiral stairway leading to the floors above and below. The three had evidently left the floor by this avenue. That they had gone down and not up was sure from my